

no. 6 deliciosa

my obsession for this summer is carnivals, partly because they're this combination of magic and sleaze, this perfect balance of glitter and grease that's not so easy to come by. that's what i craved all summer long, and now that summer's over i can't tell you if i ever really found it or not. and i didn't even try looking for it at the carnival--i photographed carousels and ferris wheels for this, but i did all that without ever setting foot inside. i stayed on the other side of the fence and got crazy with the zoom lens.

And the other part of being obsessed has to do with the way the carnival feels like home and like being a kid; it provides access to memories in a physical, sensory way that you can't get when you're lying on your bedroom floor and daydreaming and trying to remember. Getting access to those memories is something important to me—because of writing, because I don't ever want my own personal history to get all blurry from nostalgia and from becoming older, because I want to figure out who my family is and what "home" means to me.

what carnivals make me remember: heavy metal songs blaring on the ride where you go around in the circle and then go backwards and the guy in the booth says "you wanna go fast? you wanna go faster?" and everyone screams; wishing I were as old as my cousins so I could I wear big, teased, hairsprayed hair and wet and wild lipstick and halter tops and sneak cigarettes and flirt with the guy working the ferris wheel; hating myself for being too scared to go on so many of the rides while my big brother has zero fear about getting turned upside down and whipped all around; candy apple hard red sugar stuff stuck in teeth; my dad (a.k.a. the tallest man in the world) winning me top-shelf stuffed animals at the booth where you throw basketballs through the hoop, and me thinking he's the coolest guy on the face of the earth; mean girls, scary boys, fried dough, loud bells and the constant screeching of metal, begging to stay five more minutes and sometimes getting my way but sometimes not.

I can remember all of those things anytime I want to, but only when I'm actually standing in front of the yo-yo do all the memories start to relive themselves on me and I start feeling the fear or jealousy or giddiness all over again, but in this removed, echo-y, flattened out way. All this stuff I've forgotten (the awkwardness of being an 11-year-old girl, the comfort of believing in my father 100 percent), just like I've forgotten that this version of home still exists. It's still there and it never went away, I'm just not a part of it anymore. that's something that always amazes and saddens and troubles me—that all these worlds go on even after you've left them, and they become someone else's and never really be let back in, you can just take whatever little glimpses are available to you and remember and try to piece things together and figure out how you got here and where you're going next.



I hope I'm not starting a thing of writing something that could be subtitled "the last time I kissed ______" in every zine I do. but I'm probably not. There are only so many last kiss stories to tell, and a lot of them are pretty boring or just need to be left alone for whatever reason.

I feel like I've been working on this forever, and so I'm really happy to be finally done with it. so much has changed since I first started writing stuff for this—almost everything was finished by early august, and I could list off every little thing that's been made different since then, but you already know about most of it (because it's probably happening to you, too) and the rest I'll just keep quiet about. somewhere along the line I re-acquired the emotional and intellectual maturity of my 15-year-old self. I can't tell if that's bad or not. I'm happy, but sometimes I get scared that I'm going to end up ruining everything.

Honestly, I sort of don't ever want to make a zine again. I feel bored with myself and what I'm doing in this format; I want to work on other things for a while. I feel like I'm just saying the same things over and over again, and i'm not exactly sure why i feel the need to keep saying them. i worry that doing this zine the way i've been doing is some sort of unconscious attempt to hold myself back and keep myself from doing other scarier stuff. which doesn't mean that i feel that making zines is a piece of cake, because it's not. it's just there's stuff that i'm neglecting and i have to stop neglecting it, or it's going to get ugly.

but hey, maybe I'll have something else out in a few months. Who knows? In the meantime, just write and tell me what you think. Please? I will write back, even if it takes me a lot longer than you'd like. I promise you that.

Thank you so much for reading. Take care of yourself.



zines you should get

lovesongs by laura
[agentmarcjacobs@hotmail.com]

melt the snow by teri [vlass@interlog.com]

ocean. (a comp zine edited by anke)
[linotte77@hotmail.com]

pansy by laura [pansyversace@aol.com]

picafLor by celia [perezeeb@yahoo.com]

southern fried darling by amy
[amy@girlswirl.net]

space by moira [moira@nutmeg.gen.nz]

sparks and weasels by austin
[austincharron@chek.com]

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[listening}

every song/album/whatever I've already told you about here, plus: "country feedback" by r.e.m., john frusciante the *going inside* ep and live stuff, the slits *cut*, the entire u2 catalogue, *red hot and lisbon*, bjork, alicia keys, sinead o'connor, *radio ethiopia*, destiny's child, suicide, lou reed *transformer*, the stooges s/t, outkast, os mutantes, *the best of salt 'n pepa*, the first ramones album, blonde redhead, rolling stones *tattoo you*

{reading]

interpreter of maladies by jhumpa lahiri, a.m. holmes, *ripening seed* and *mitsou* and *chance acquaintances* by colette, *echo* by francesca lia block, "stella" by anais nin, *miss wyoming* and *all families are psychotic* by douglas coupland, *the passion* and *oranges are not the only fruit* by jeanette winterson, *the girls' guide to hunting and fishing* by melissa bank, *aquamarine* by alice hoffman, *cavedweller* by dorothy allison

[consuming}

tofutti pops, envirokids gorilla munch cereal, coffee oreo ice cream from christina's, peach margaritas, jalapeno rice cheese, crunch maki, tamago, strawberry lemonade, goat feta, avocado, rice &cucumber salad, sea salt & vinegar kettle chips, peking duck, orzo, more cheap merlot, eskimo pie pops, soba, homemade rice pilaf & tabouleh, pinot grigio



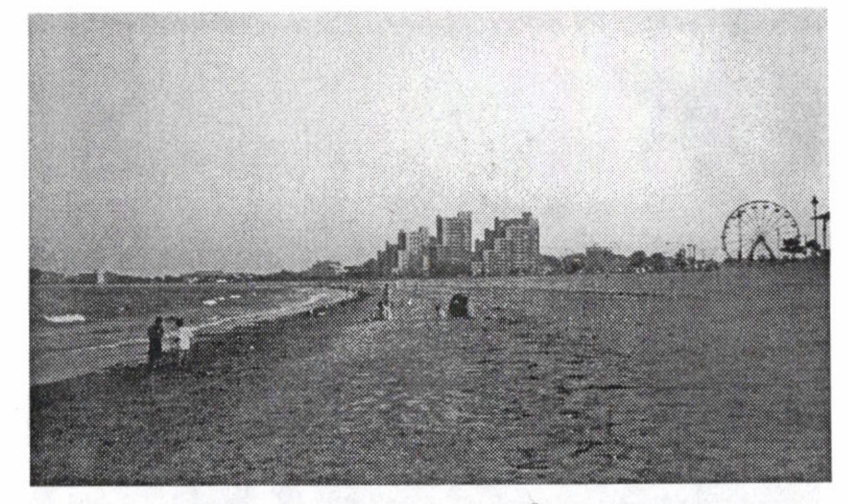
So this is the beginning of deliciosa #6. it's really more like deliciosa 6.5, cuz i had a whole other issue all laid out and photocopied and then i looked it over and decided i hated it and i started all over. which was frustrating but it needed to be done. the first half of the zine is all about summer, about the different parts of summer. i don't know what the second half is about. you tell me.

Oh, and the pictures were all taken by me, and my lovely friend jason gets a big thanks for helping me to scan them in (even though he's not going to end up reading this).

and I always thank the same people, but the same people always must be thanked: amanda, anke, kimra, kat, the lauras, marla, teri. thank you all. so much. and thanks to everyone who's sent me trades and letters, too. also big huge thanks to kristy smitten kitten (tbns.net/smittenkitten; po box 1179, blackburn north, VIC, 3130 australia) and ericka pander (panderzinedistro.com; po box 582142, minneapolis, mn, 55458-2142, usa) for distro-ing deliciosa.

I'm pretty much sold out of all back issues, except for a few #5s i've got lying around. if you really desperately need to get your hands on one, I might be able to help you out.

deliciosa costs $1 or 2 stamps or trade. please get in touch if you're interested in distro-ing this: deeelish77@yahoo.com; p.o. box 26, watertown, ma, 02471-0026, usa.



1. the way seasons begin

This year summer started about six days before the calendar said it would, on a Friday night right in the middle of june. After work I drove out to revere beach because it was so hot, unbearably hot, and there's no air conditioning in my apartment and I wanted to go somewhere where the air wasn't so goddamn thick. The beach wasn't any cooler but I walked with my feet in the water and after a while that made my body feel less like it was on fire. And there were so many people—all these little kids running around, swimming in their clothes and making sandcastles and knocking them down. And there's this strip of restaurants and bars and ice cream places that runs alongside the water, and so much traffic and the cars are all blasting their stereos so loud, and the bass makes the car doors rattle so hard it sounds like they're gonna fall off. And everybody checks each other out and most of the time that makes me smile but when it's some gross old man drooling over a little girl in a bikini I just want to punch him in the face.

So I walked and I had my walkman and my camera, and I listened to a tape of jane's addiction songs, most of them live, and I sang along in my head and made up stories with the songs as their soundtrack. I walked to the end of the beach, which is a few miles, and I crossed over the big main road and went over to the carnival and took pictures of the ferris wheel and yo-yo and tilt-a-whirl and the air should have smelled like cotton candy and candy apples and hot dogs and popcorn but there was this huge dumpster right out front, so the air smelled like garbage.

And when I left it was getting dark, a few minutes past twilight, and the sky was red-orange, and my skin was salty from sweat and from ocean and on top of the salt or maybe underneath it there was that oily feeling that comes from being so hot and it

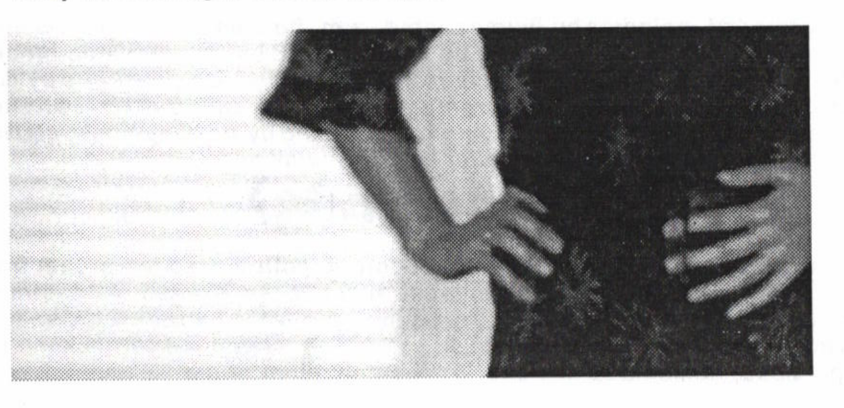
what romance means right now:

• walking home from seeing mary timony at 1 in the morning, and I'm by myself, sozzled, and it's mid-october but it's warm out. I'm wearing my sparkly new party frock and sparkly tights and my foxy coat with the fake fur collar, and my favorite shoes. My hair is a big old tangly mess because I'm wearing it down and it's tying knots in itself and I haven't cut it in over a year. Mass Ave is mostly empty and inman street is so quiet and there's a mist in the air but it doesn't really smell like fall yet. I saw björk tonight too but in my head I'm singing "poison moon" and not "isobel" or "pagan poetry." It's the guitar that does the trick, always. There's a run in my tights, all the way down my right leg even though I tried to mend it with bright red nail polish. I'll still wear them, though. it kind of looks good.

• living in the same town as one of my dearest friends for the first time since we were in school, and going out for sushi & for ice cream & for carrot cake and almond joy hot chocolate and tea and lemon squares at 1369 and doing silly girly stuff like shopping for jeans at the mall on a rainy Saturday afternoon. Or just sitting in each other's livingrooms and watching bad tv and calling calling each other all the time and forever spilling our guts out all over the damn place.

• hearing "I didn't mean to hurt you" by spiritualized for the 1st time and knowing I'm going to take it and make it my own and turn it into something even bigger than it already is. & the romance is in the words too: "I miss you like I miss the water when I'm burning." 1,000 sighs.

• the strokes and my rhinestone-studded aerosmith shirt and patti smith singing "when doves cry" segued into "ain't it strange" and driving around the city I was born in early Sunday morning and standing just a few feet away from dave navarro and not feeling ridiculous for still having a crush on him and black eyeshadow with glitter and going to see iggy pop and my new bag from queen bee and running all the time and writing every night and vegan rum truffles and led zeppelin and pioneer valley and learning to love autumn again



at the roof we used to always crawl out onto, back when you used to have parties every night. the sky gets lighter and lighter and when it's truly morning I decide to head home. this afternoon there's an outdoor sonic youth show in providence, and I wake you up and ask you if you want to go. It takes a while for your brain to activate and answer the question, and you tell me no, you can't go, you have to work today. And you ask if I'm leaving and I say yes, and you ask why and I say because. And we're just sort of staring at each other and my stomach starts to hurt again, and you grab the back of my head and kiss me really hard and I kiss back, but only for a few seconds.

Whenever I kiss you I feel like I'm falling into a tunnel; in my head your mouth looks like this huge tunnel, and it's dark but it's not scary. That's the first thing I felt the first time I kissed you, like I was falling and falling but it was going to be okay. like alice in wonderland, but not really. Not falling downward, but falling forward or falling sideways.

When the kiss is over I smile and hug you quickly and I get out of bed and walk to the door. you ask if I'm mad and I say no and then I say goodbye, see you later. I shut the door behind me and wonder how long it will take you to fall asleep, if your eyes will be closed by the time I've made it to my car. I hope it takes at least until I get to the end of your street, a good two or three minutes of staring at the ceiling and replaying what just happened.

Driving home I wonder why you'd think I'd be mad, why I wouldn't be half-expecting a kiss goodbye. Everyone should always get a kiss goodbye, and it doesn't matter if it's one kind of kiss or another. we used to all always kiss each other goodbye, and people outside the circle would make fun, saying how you'd think we were all going to our own separate country for a year, but really we'd see each other at the very same coffeehouse the very next night. it's not like that anymore, which is enough to make me cry, but your kiss counts for something, and you're probably the one I missed kissing the most.

And it's so silly to me how configuration of lip and tongue can mean so much when it comes to what we're trying to communicate in a kiss. it might be okay for that girl to stop talking to you for a day or two if she found out about how you just kissed me. but if the kiss had been close-mouthed and had landed two inches to the left of my lips instead of directly against them, then she'd have to pretend not to care or maybe she wouldn't even mind all that much to begin with. And what's more, if it really had been just been a quick kiss on the cheek, my stomach wouldn't be hurting now and I wouldn't feel like I had a story to tell to my best friend from school when I talk to her later on today. It's so strange how these tiny little physical things reveal so many lies and confessions and secrets and such huge imperfections and beauty marks on our big pink-red hearts. They're hearts that are always changing shape and color but hopefully not drastically enough to cut anyone out forever. or at least not yet, anyway.

didn't feel good but I liked it, because that's how you feel in the summer, especially in places like this, where the subway runs right along the shore. Pulling out of my parking spot, "welcome to the jungle" came on the radio, and it was so perfect, and it almost made up for the lack of heavily tattooed, hairsprayed, supertightblackjeans-clad guys and girls I'd seen on the beach. It made me think of preteen summers at hampton, and skee ball, and cigarettes, and cheap beer.

And the ride home was so hot, in my car without airconditioning and when I got home my 2 boy roommates were watching baseball in the livingroom, looking almost dead. and with them was a girl i hadn't seen in so long that i didn't recognize her at first. but when i did I curled up next to her and touched her face and her hair and she laughed at me for not realizing who she was sooner. She's an old girlfriend of mine and my roommate's ("girlfriend" for me meaning that we used to drive around all night and smoke cigarettes and write each other letters with a thousand keroppi stickers; "girlfriend" for him meaning that they used to sleep together), and she was sitting next to him on the couch and that made me happy because I want her to be around early in the morning and late at night and if that means sleeping in his bed sometimes, then that's great.

and she stayed all night and we didn't say much to each other but it was heaven sitting next to her, admiring her tattoos and listening to all the bad words that come out of her mouth. She's one of about 5 people I know whose rudeness I find endearing. and endearing rudeness is so rock and roll. She could be my iggy pop.

And we all kept sweating and kept the beer in a cooler in the middle of the livingroom so we wouldn't have to all the way out to the kitchen to get it. and everyone went to bed sometime in the morning and those two went into his room and I was happy for them, and I put the tv on with the sound turned down and listened to *kid a* and tried to draw but it didn't work, and the fan was on so high I couldn't really hear the stereo and I went to sleep and kept waking up because my room never really cools down, and my skin was all hot and my bed was all sweat and yeah, it was summer.

2. inspiration into passion

I guess what spring does is sort of gently/sweetly stir you into doing something grand like making art or falling in love or moving to a faraway place or what have you; then what summer does is make that inspiration sink all the way into your heart and your blood so it becomes almost your entire being (though sometimes it fades and dies and that's that). sometime in june inspiration gets converted to passion, by the air or by your body temperature or by something else altogether. And inspiration is (archaically) defined as breathing into or upon something, so passion is like the quickened breathing that comes with love or sex or jumping out of airplanes or anything else that makes you feel like you're not inside your own body anymore. (*the faster I breathe the further I go...*).

[If you need to think about it horticulturally, then spring can be those first tiny little blossoms, the darling buds of may or whatever, and summer is some fat, juicy, messy, overripe nectarine.]

I said I was going to learn to play guitar soon and I haven't yet but there are other things I've been discovering and rediscovering and thinking about and getting all worked up about, and it's good. and when I wrote about inspiration before it was all about creativity, but now I mean something more than that. it has to do with everything, every second of every minute of every hour of every day, learning how to twist things around a bit, play with all the variables, all the microscopic things that all piece together and determine how happy and good you're going to feel this very second. Training yourself to recognize what's going to color the picture way too dark and shadowy and steer yourself towards what's going to make everything feel okay, even if it's just for a little while. trying really hard not to do anything that's going to make me hate myself or feel bored or frustrated or sick or jealous or mad. I think for most of my life I've been tricking myself into thinking that there's so much that doesn't count, that the details don't matter too much. Which of course is dead wrong. And I need to keep myself from looking back too much and looking forward too much and not believing in myself. because lately I've been noticing that a lot of the time I don't believe in myself as much as I should.

So I feel different lately, and inside that different-feeling there's been the very slow birth of inspiration and ideas for a new project. It's a writing project, there's no visual component (not yet, anyway), and for the first time ever I'm approaching writing as "a project," which feels weird but good. there's research and planning involved, and mapping things out and taking notes and being very librarian-like, which I fucking love; it's exhilarating. in a way it's more like taking an old piece of writing, a story, and giving shape to it, and I sort of feel like I've finally, after years, figured out what the story is about. I figured it out while driving down a road by the beach at cape cod, fourth of july weekend. For some reason ideas related to this story always happen on roads—last fall I had this big idea while driving along route 9 right outside amherst, and I thought I'd figured everything out, but when I tried to put things in place I got very depressed. But this new idea isn't depressing at all. it's whatever the opposite of "depressing" is. and I'm so excited and I want to tell you all about it, but I just can't. I have to do it first, then I can tell you. All I can say now is it's big and it's something I've needed/wanted to do for a long time and I'm so happy to have gotten closer to actually doing it.

but hiding underneath all the good stuff is something else, something scary and mean trying to fuck everything up, because there always needs to be something trying to fuck everything up. it's this feeling like, "you are only going to feel this good and this creative and this ambitious and this focused for a little while, then summer is going to be over and your mood is going to change and you're not going to care anymore and you're going to forget and you're going to ruin everything and waste it all away." I try to ignore it but it's there, under my skin or in the back of my brain. I hate it.

the people you're killing and buildings you're blowing up but I just can't get into it. you're leaning forward on the couch and I stretch my legs out behind you and it doesn't seem rude that my shoes are still on. The standard for what's rude and what's not doesn't really apply here, and you're probably used to your guests being too grossed out to walk around barefoot on your floors anyway.

When it's brian's turn at the video game you lean back and pick up my feet and drop them back down into your lap and wrap one hand around my left ankle and brian looks over and raises his eyebrows and asks where your girlfriend is tonight, and I have to smile. You answer him without taking your eyes off the screen; she's at hampton beach with her cousins. I finish my beer and take another one without asking and I make you give me a cigarette too. now everyone has cigarettes and the smoke makes my eyes burn and when I'm done with mine I go into the bathroom to splash my face with cold water and my mascara's cheap so it runs and trickles down my cheeks. I don't feel like going back out into the livingroom yet, so I sit in your tub and wonder why you have six different kinds of shampoo and remember the time when there was a party here a few years ago and you and stacy and I were sitting in the tub and I said let's pretend this is that smashing pumpkins video and we kissed and then stacy turned the water on and we jumped out so fast and fell all over each other and you came so close to banging your head against the chipped porcelain of the sink.

When I go back into the livingroom it feels like neither of you has moved or spoken or breathed since I left, and I finish another beer and a few more cigarettes and it's sometime in the morning now but I don't have to go home. my family's away at the beach and won't be back for three days, so I can stay here all night if I want. and someone else might think it's boring as hell here, but to me it's as crazy as being on another planet or breathing underwater—I could spend days or years or millennia on this couch.

Watching the video game, the rhythm of gunshots makes me fall asleep and at some point you wake me up and tell me I can lie down upstairs if I want, and I leave the room without saying goodnight to brian and climb the staircase that's all cluttered with cds and clothes and magazines. Your room is the same as it's always been, and there's still the graffiti on the walls from when you first moved in and bought spray cans in all different colors. I wrote my name near the closet door, and dotted the 'i' with a star instead of a heart.

I've only slept in this bed once before, but I remember the smell, like some stronger, muskier version of the smell on your body. I can still hear the tv from up here, but I fall asleep in a few minutes, my stomach hurting like it sometimes does when I'm sleeping in another boy's bed. a few hours later I wake up when you come in the room and shut the door behind you. I keep my eyes shut and pretend to still be sleeping; I'm curious to feel how you'll try to move around me. after your shoes clunk onto the floor you lie down next to me, close enough for your elbow to be touching my side, but far away enough for us to be two kids at a sleepover party, each in our own sleeping bags.

You fall asleep fast, but I stay wide awake, staring out the window

and she smokes newports while she plays, leaving the cigarette dangling from her lips, right at the center of her mouth. Her face is hard and pale and her peroxided hair reminds of that girl you used to date a few years ago, the one who's four years older than you and everyone hated except for me. they were all scared of her and I was scared too but there was something kind about her, like if you got her on your side she'd never let anyone mess with you.

The girl with the same name as me pretty much takes over the video game; she's not dying, so no one else gets a turn, and mark rolls a joint and passes it around, and it's bad, really bad and really weak. I pass it to you but you don't want any. when it's all gone I'm ready to leave and the radio hasn't played anything good since a black sabbath song half an hour ago and there's no air in here and I figure if I stare at you long enough you'll get the hint, and finally you do. so we go down to my car and on the way to your house we listen to a tape that boy made me, and it's all songs you've never heard and you're curious and ask me who all the bands are and I feel like a snob listing off all these indie rock names. I can't tell if it means anything to you or not.

At your house it's even hotter than it was at keith's and I can't believe it's only the beginning of june. We sit on the couch that smells like cigarettes and is covered with cat hair, and I say something about how if it's this hot inside at nighttime, imagine what it must be like on the sun. and that sets you off and you tell me all about the sun and how it's 15 million degrees celsius at the center and the pressure is 100 billion times the pressure on earth and half the hydrogen in the core of the sun has been fused into helium and I listen carefully and try to follow along because this is what you care about most, space and heat and atoms and light. It's my favorite thing about you sometimes, how you're so in love with science and how no one else would ever guess you are. They'd think you love your guitar more and I don't really understand why you don't, I've never understood it.

You turn the tv on and flip around and there's some bad horror movie on one of the pay channels and about three minutes into it there's a knock on the door and it's brian but I don't recognize him right away because last time I saw him his stringy hair was halfway down the back and now it's all shaved off. He flops down in the easy chair and he and I nod toward each other but don't really say anything, and my brain flashes back to the night last summer when I had a party at my house and he spent the whole time writing really bad poems in crayon on my little brother's brown paper lunch bags and passing them on to kerry. He had some kind of scary crush on her and she was so creeped out and that night she made me sleep with her in my parents' bedroom and lock the door behind us so he couldn't come in. and in the morning when we woke up and went downstairs he'd been up all night, cleaning the house top to bottom.

Brian's brought beer with him and hands one to each of us and it's warm and I have to force it down and I can hardly swallow. No one's really watching the movie so brian puts some video game on and you two play and it's keith's house all over again, and I try to care about all

In a way it's so natural for things to end right at the same time that summer does. it's expected. It's like any other summer love, like the sad song about the boy and girl who meet at the beach and they fall in love but then it's time to leave and they say they'll write letters but they don't, and it's over. that never happened to me but I always wanted it to, and my summer flings (if they can be so-classified) have always been less popsong, more difficult and thus more difficult to unravel, so sometimes they spill over to the next season or even just pause and pick up where they started the following year. But I think it's easier to fall in love in the summer. Even if it's lust disguised as love, there's still something there.

And I'm wondering if what I'm feeling right now is lust or love, and I'm wondering about the staying power of lust versus that of love, and I'm getting worried all over again. which is stupid and I want to make it stop, but it's so hard. I don't know how anyone keeps this from happening, how people overcome the fear of fucking up or at least just ignore it till it goes away. I don't know how people make movies or albums or books or how mothers have and raise children or how anyone does anything without going crazy with the possibility of ruining everything or losing their stamina halfway through. it's enough to make you not want to get out of bed in the morning.

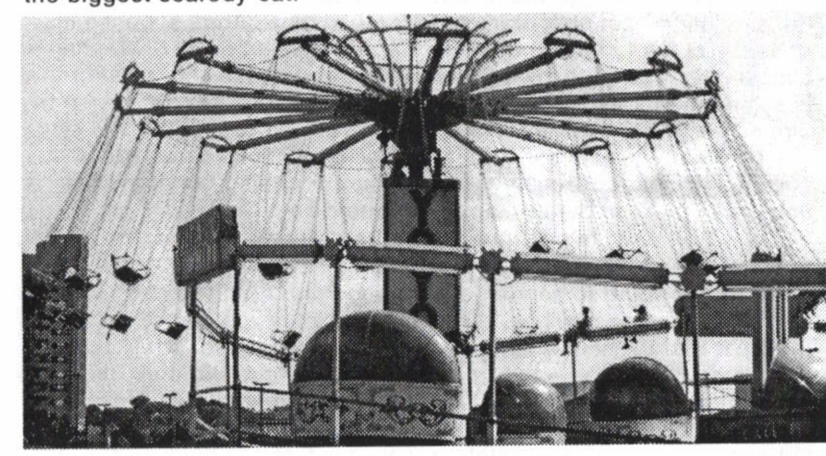
I'm being high-drama but I don't care. stuff like this is really the only thing I get high-drama about these days. And I suppose it's dramatic of me to look at the calendar and say, "it's july 6, summer's almost over," when really it just started a few weeks ago. what I need is someone to keep me from whining and worrying like this; I need to hire someone to follow me around and never let me fall into this silly, dangerous pattern of doubting myself and feeling so paralyzed. It's such horrid post-college angst and I want to wash it out of my hair and prove that I'm better than that. I could be.

For now I'm going to just try not to think about it, the ending of summer and the onset of winter and cold air and all that...I'll pretend it's not going to happen and maybe it'll turn out to not be so bad as I'm fearing it will be. Which is usually the way things work—for the most part it's only when I'm insanely, blindly, obsessively positive that something's going to turn out all for the best that it all goes to hell (and that's a predicament that I can definitely relate to love affairs). And I guess all I can do is not look back and not look forward but at the same not completely forget about what's back and what's forward, which is sometimes the hardest thing in the world.

This morning riding the bus through chinatown, I realized how maybe I'm a little confused as to what I mean when I say "passion." And I love the dictionary definitions, like "intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction," and "an ardent affection: LOVE," and "an outbreak of anger," and "the emotions as distinguished from reason." "Passion" is really such an exquisite word. And as rich as all those Webster's definitions are, I always feel the need to have my own codes and meanings and my own secret lexicon, and I want to define "passion" for myself, and I'm not sure how to get to that definition. I am so passionate about music, especially rock and roll music, words,

books, stories, the physical act of writing, ink, paper, the people I love (whether they are still in my life or not) cities, and that sometimes includes my own, the ocean, cars, driving, roads, home and family (and redefinition/exploration of both), heat, light, the kind of weather that gets into your heart and so much more, of course, but some of it is secret. Trying to find what all these things have in common, what's linking them to each other, what thread is running between them, I first want to say "love," but I know there's something more. These are all things I love, and they are also things that never fail to inspire me. they're so powerful and in that power there's a rare kind of beauty. They're what I live for. they help me to fall in love and give me hope and stop me from shutting myself off and hating everything.

They keep me sane but also make me crazy. maybe that's the most important thing. passion doesn't always make you feel good and strong and happy; it can make you miserable and sick and make you hate and make you want to tear everything apart. But it never leaves you bored or boring, I guess. which is maybe why I want/need it so bad right now. when it comes down to it, I would much prefer the roller coaster to the carousel, even though sometimes I come off like the biggest scaredy-cat.



3. electricity

on the fourth of july my city is electric. electricity like the spiritualized song or like what makes your stereo go, electrocution like what happens when you get hit by lightning, electrified like how guitars sometimes are. It seems far away but at the same time it's right at the center of my heart, it glows and burns and it's all blurry and crackling and hazy and it's alive.

This year was my fourth fourth in boston, and it was strange and it wasn't what I expected, which is exactly what I expected. I won't tell you what happened, but I saw the first fireworks through the windows of a red line train and I ran down mass ave in heels and I

You and keith take turns playing the video game and I sit next to you, right next to you, our knees are touching. It's a million degrees in here and we're both wearing jeans and if it were anyone else I'd be too hot to be touched right now, but it's you, so it's okay. You guys ask if I want to play and I say no, I'll just watch. I don't say much. I sit there, I listen, I watch, I smile when you look at me or sometimes I just stare really hard to try to make you smile first. after a few minutes you take the pack of marlboro reds out of your pocket and I have to ask you for one and you pretend to be mad but really you're not. And keith lights up one of his old golds and there's only one window in here so the smoke just kind of hangs in the air, all lazy and ghost-like. I smoke and the cigarette tastes really good and I tell you that and you say how cigarettes always taste good at keith's, and they taste really good at the diner up the street too. and keith says they taste really good at the field behind the airport, and I say they taste really good down by the lake. Then we don't say anything for a while. You guys aren't talking much in general, except about the video game, which is annoying, because I want to try to figure out if you're still going out with that girl. and I don't want to have to come right out and ask you, because that would be just too degrading. And you don't come right out and ask me if I'm still with that boy, and even if you did ask I really wouldn't be sure what to tell you; I have no idea if I'm still with him or if I still want to be or if I'm in love with him anymore or if I ever was. I want to be in love with you because it would be such a nice change of pace, it would be so convenient and I don't think you're capable of breaking my heart.

Sometimes I tell people I'm in love with you but really I don't know. I don't know if I'll ever know.

So I listen to the radio, and it's some bad song I've heard before but I don't know the name or what band it is, and you sing along under your breath. And it makes me sad that you're singing the song, because it's not good enough for you. The songs you write are way better. but, really, I don't even know if you write songs anymore, so I ask if you do, and you say no, not really. And I ask if you still play your guitar and you say sometimes, not really. And I remember the first time I saw you play, at some awful rec hall out in the suburbs and there were all these dumb girls there and afterwards they were swooning over you and saying the most ridiculous things and I sort of stepped back and smiled and watched and gave you a hug goodbye and you were 15 and you had no idea what to do with all these girls swarming around you.

After we've been sitting here for about an hour, the doorbell rings and it's this boy I went to elementary school with, mark, and his girlfriend. Before last summer I hadn't seen mark since he changed school districts in fifth grade, but then one night in july he showed up at your house and we remembered each other. mark still looks sort of the same as he did when he was 10, but now his eyes look tired and you can tell from his face that he smokes too many cigarettes. He's still so skinny and his girlfriend is skinny too, and she has the same name as me so everytime you or mark or keith speaks to either one of us, we both look up. I think it's pretty funny and I smile at her but she doesn't smile back. she plays the video game and she's better than any of the boys



an untitled love story

I let you pull me around like this because it feels like if I don't, it means I don't have a heart or a soul anymore, it means I'm
20 and not 17. And it's not even being pulled around, really, I love it, I love it when you remind me of everything I've forgotten, all these things from such a long time ago. from being a teenager, and even from when I was a little girl, when I was five or six and I used to spend so many nights in 3-decker apartments like this, with my older cousins and they taught me about cigarettes, making out, and lipstick. Now you've brought me back to that neighborhood and it looks exactly the same, not a thing has changed in 15 years. The graffiti hasn't been washed off and there's the same ancient swingset at the playground, and they still haven't taken down that big old slide even though at least twice a year some kid breaks his arm on the way down, just like my cousin nick did. And that awful old public pool's still here, but it's closed right now because it's nighttime, and I wouldn't be surprised if later on we try to break in, because that's the kind of thing we do when you're around.

I've never been to this apartment you're taking me to before; it's keith's and usually he comes over your place instead of you going over there. I don't know why things are different tonight. And the apartment doesn't feel like anyone actually lives here. It feels like someone's moving in, with big cardboard boxes everywhere, but keith's lived here for years. And the only room where there's furniture is the room he leads us into. There's a couch, an old, falling-apart couch that's missing a cushion. And there's a coffee table that's covered with empty busch cans and an ashtray spilling out ash all over the place. and there's a tv and a stereo, and keith turns both on, and the tv gives us some video game you're going to play all night, and the stereo gives us the metal station at the end of the dial, the one that's based in town and always lets me know I'm home.

I got mad and got rescued and walked the wrong way over the longfellow bridge.

my first fourth of july in boston was my first-ever real big night out in boston. that afternoon i drove up from cape cod, still a little sandy and salty, and went to my best friend's house and we got on the t, which still seemed so new and scary and weird to me. and we went to beacon hill, where our friend laura had a tiny little apartment with a roof. She wasn't home from work yet but somehow e and I scammed our way up to the roof deck, carrying the beer e had just bought with her fake i.d. and we smoked cigarettes and drank and went down to laura's apartment and she was home and her roommate had all these boys over and two were from my hometown, which I thought was the wildest thing ever, and another was this scary older boy with tattoos and I couldn't stop staring at him and we talked about jane's addiction and e told me to stay away from him; he was trouble. We went up to the roof again and you could see the river and the fireworks from up there and everyone all around beacon hill was out on the roof too, and all these stereos were playing the live broadcast of the pops and when the 1812 overture came on and all the fireworks went crazy I totally fell in love with boston, it seemed so big and so full of possibility and so mysterious and so wonderful and exhilarating; it felt like new york feels to me now, like a city should feel, but even more exciting because I knew that soon I was going to be part of it, I was going to live there and be right in the middle of it all.

the fireworks ended, and the rest of the night was dangerous and beautiful. We went dancing with those boys and after dancing it was just e and I stuck in central square at 2 a.m., trying to figure out how to get home without having to pay for a cab. walking down mass ave towards harvard (and I had no idea where i was because how central connected to harvard was still such a mystery to me), there were three boys a little bit ahead of us and one of them was playing guitar and one was carrying bongos and the other was just sort of dancing along and smoking cigarettes and singing. And e started talking to them because she's never afraid of talking to stranger-boys and the dancing boy lit her cigarette and he said he was from paris and the other two said they were from l.a., they were in a band and had just played somewhere in central square and now they needed a place to sleep for the night. and e told them that if they gave us a ride home they could camp out in her parents' backyard. Which seemed to make perfect sense at the time, so we all got in their car and the two l.a. boys were in the front seat and paris boy and e and I were in the back and paris boy kept saying "holy cow!" but with his accent it sounded like, "holly cow." And we got lost and unlost and at some point the news was broken that the boys really couldn't stay at e's house after all, and they got mad and we got scared and they kept referring to us as "you girls," which made us laugh so hard.

But we got home finally, and, oh, the next fourth of July was even more silly and we broke many laws and came extremely close to getting arrested and had a not very friendly chat with a state trooper, but in the end we were safe. That night was so hot, it felt like whole

city was burning to the ground or something, and we stumbled all around, and our blood felt like it was on fire. We somehow broke into a beacon hill apartment so we could go up to the roof and the landlady saw us and she was an older woman and she told us how we should be careful and if we didn't watch our selves we'd get hurt and killed and raped, and this city is so crazy now, not like it used to be.

Last year was more tame. I think we only did one illegal thing. and we actually watched the fireworks sort of up close, on the longfellow bridge, instead of from someone else's rooftop.

And I'd been hoping we'd get up to a roof this year, but it didn't happen. Which is too bad, because I needed that. I get bored with where I live and I need to see it differently, because sometimes it feels like I'm going to lose my mind if I stay here a second longer.

When you look at the city from someone else's roof on july 4th, it doesn't feel like it belongs to you anymore. it's a version of the city you'd see in dreams or daydreams or in a movie. It's how the city felt the first time you were inside it, when you were lost but in a good way, a way that makes you feel like you've had so much cheap champagne. You look down at lights and tall buildings and it looks as lovely and as full of secrets as it did back when you had no idea where newbury is in relation to boylston or what streets run parallel to mass ave. it still feels like something you dreamed of when you were14 or 15 or 16 and all you wanted to do was go as far away as you could possibly run from where you grew up. that was the place where you would finally be who you really are and you were meant to be and you'll be in love with everything every second of everyday, and your life will be a movie.

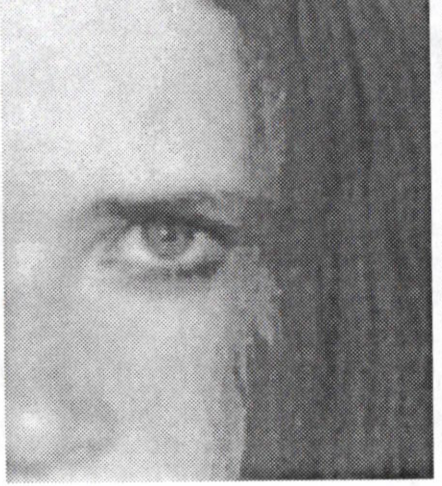
but my life is not a movie, and I don't know if anyone's life is a movie. And if it is, do you always feel like you're acting?

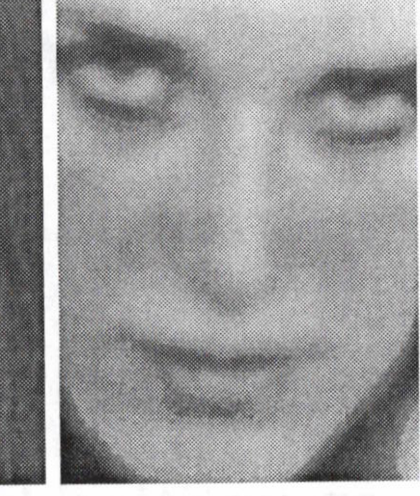
but sometimes life is a movie. the scenery, the characters, the drama all works itself out. and the cinematography is brilliant. I've had those times last as long as five seconds or an entire season, and like all truly dangerous things you can't plan what's going to happen.

but fourth of july is always like a movie. the first glimpse I catch of boston on 7/4, it looks so different from the day before. And then the next day it goes back to normal—not when the clock strikes midnight, but when the stars go away and the sun bleaches the night out and the sky is blue and white and you'd never guess there'd been a million more colors up there not all that long ago.

4. a summer weekend

alone at the beach on a Friday afternoon when I should be at work but I'm not even in massachusetts, I stretch out on my towel and read colette and eat a fortune plum and then a japanese pear. I wasn't going to swim but I'll regret it if I don't, and the water is colder than I remember and at first the waves are big but then they get smaller and less scary, which is horribly disappointing. It's not a hot day and I leave after a few hours and go get an avocado and sour cream and salsa sandwich on tortilla and a half-frozen strawberry lemonade from my favorite place ever and I eat down by the water and it's wonderful. But I'm sick





spent in his room and how I loved that he was the only boy around that said "making out" instead of "hooking up." and when I think about it those two are really a horrible couple and he keeps breaking her heart but I love them both so much and I always will and I hope I'm not turning them into some sort of symbol.

especially her, because even though I hadn't seen her in so long she let me sleep in her bed and we talked till our eyes fell shut and she told me how whenever she's around me she feels like she's drunk because I make her so giddy and silly and wild. Which is one of the nicest things I've heard in a while. And I want to write a note to her and him and to everyone else, all these boys and girls, and it will say, "I'm in love with all of you and it hasn't been like this in a long time and I'm so happy."

before I went down to see them, I was going to make a mixtape for the trip, all songs about boys and girls:

sexy boy **venus as a boy** when you're a boy china girl **what it feels like for a girl** candy perfume girl about a girl **where boys fear to tread** ...

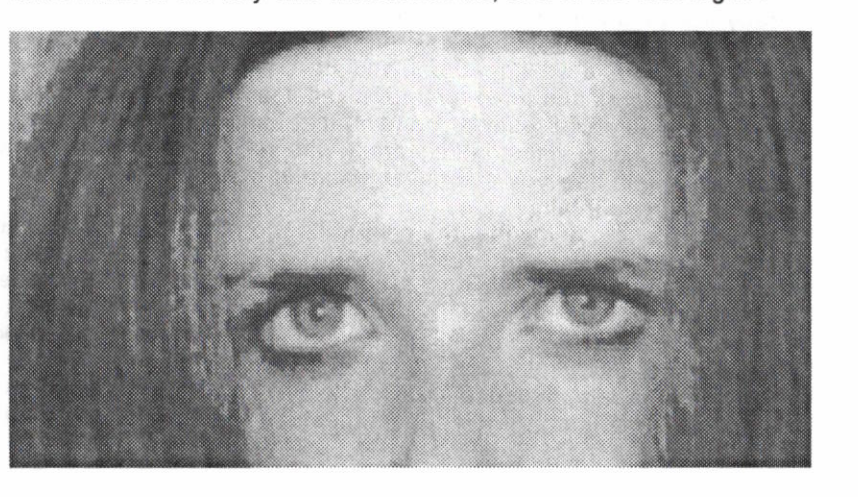
But I didn't make it, I just scrawled out all the songs on a hotpink post-it note and stuck it to my desk. It would have been nice though. I listen to it in my head.

out all over the town and spending all your money and crowding into bars where you have to scream to be heard.

That's what I always do with those two girls, the two girls I don't see much of anymore, and that's what I did last time I saw them and the night ended with me running away and I don't regret it. I hated the game of playing the grown-up city girl with the fancy drink and cold cold eyes so I quit. What kills me is the lack of imagination—drink your $8 cosmopolitan, stand with your hips angled that way, let your comeback to the cheesiest pickup lines be smart but not too smart. I really hate that more than anything, and I'm never going back. I used to get so sad cuz I couldn't make it work—I thought there was something tragically wrong with me. but now I know there's not and I know that if I'm going to be all right I'm never going to play the game anymore, because there is no soul in it and it always makes me feel like my shyness is the worst kind of curse. Which I know it's not.

Some people think you can actually fall in love that way, in stupid bars on boylston street or wherever the hell else. And sometimes you can fall in love but there are two girls I know who are in love and it was nothing like that for them. we walk down the street with our ice cream cones from christina's on an august Friday night (mexican chocolate, green tea, fresh mint), and they hold hands and it's a way I haven't been in a while but not long enough ago to have forgotten any of it, but I still miss it. And they are so happy and I'm jealous but not in that awful, hating, stabby way so "jealous" isn't even the right word. I don't know what is. I love the way their laughs swirl into each other; it's the sweetest sound I've heard in forever.

They could be my favorite couple right now, right next to that boy and girl I went to see at the beach at the end of july. They've been together since before I met them, since they were 16 or 17. When I think of them I think of first love and first kisses and I think of the boy who introduced us, and of the first night I



of being alone so I get back in the car and go over the bridges to aquidneck island. And on the jamestown bridge you drive up & up and when you're down at the bottom of the bridge and you look forward it feels like the bridge just drops off and all the cars are going to go flying into the ocean. I want to stare down at the water and photograph everything while I drive, but I have to settle for quickly stolen glances and images recorded with my arm stuck out the window and my eyes not staring through the camera viewfinder as I snap the picture.

A few hours later I'm in a bar on broadway in newport with two old friends and one new. We play songs on the jukebox—"suffragette city," "rainy day women," "brown sugar," "who's gonna ride your wild horses," "let's get it on," "substitute," all very much our songs—and drink the local beer and smoke enough to leave my throat still sore a few days later. We talk about old homes and teenage courtships, and I talk about the boy, the one who picks me up and takes me to the topiary garden by the ocean the next afternoon. In the garden the shrubs are cut into bears and peacocks and giraffes and elephants and we walk through them all and then go into the toy museum with all the little girls' dollhouses from so long ago (miniature oriental rugs and claw-footed bathtubs). Then we go lie under a tree and stare at the water, bodies as far away from each other as they need to be considering the much-altered nature of our friendship and all the physical rules and restrictions that come with that. afterwards we drive into town to walk down thames with all the damn tourists, then head off to newport creamery to get me a black raspberry cone with chocolate sprinkles. We hug goodbye and I drive back over the bridges to kingston and get scared of being sad and wonder if the melancholy in visiting old friends & old homes gets stronger and stronger as you get older or if eventually you just forget and don't care anymore. neither sounds like anything I want to happen to me.

In kingston I wait for kristie in behind the student union, leaning against my car and taking pictures of the hot air balloon flying overheard. in front of me is the dorm where I spent so many nights in someone else's bed sophomore year. They're tearing it down now, and my freshman year dorm has already been destroyed and replaced and it's shiny and new and it looks nothing like where I once lived.

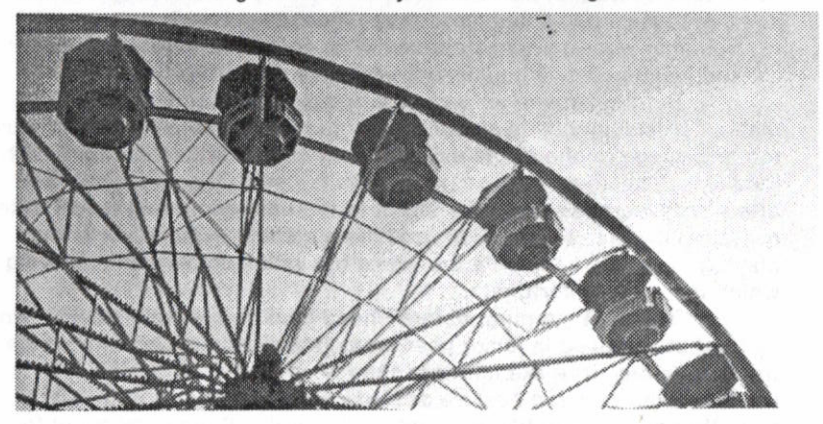
But then kristie arrives and rescues me from my hyper-dramatic, self-indulgent nostalgia and my old housemate corrina meets us too and we go to one of the old haunts and get margaritas and beachy food like clam cakes, and we gossip and reminisce and it's good. and afterwards we head down the street to the only place that would take my fake i.d. when I was 19/20, and there's some awful cover band playing, and they've redone the whole bar with leopard skin carpeting, which is just so unfortunate.

The next morning, before I head back to boston, I drive down by the house I lived in junior year, in the sleepiest part of town where the homes are more like cottages than houses. And down the road is the little area that can best be described as lazy, where there's the ferry that goes out to block island, and there's all these take-out food places where you can get seafood. And the air around there smells like

salt and grease and there's so many seagulls and a little pink store that sells fudge. It's sunset and I listened to "the sea" by morcheeba because that's how horrid I am. it's perfect and I want to never, ever leave, but then I do leave, even though my body knows that this is really my home—or one of my homes, at least.

I didn't even realize till this summer how my body connects this stretch of land with so many physical pleasures—from swimming in the ocean at night and from being drunk and from falling in love for the first time and from eating the best sugary greasy good food at my favorite café and from other people's bodies and from sleeping by the sea and from drugs and from being casually affectionate with both boys and girls in a way that I've never really been anywhere else. in a way my body has a better memory than my brain does, and it remembers this as a place of, like colette writes in ripening seed, "the world of emotions which, for want of a better term, we call physical."

A girl I know wrote this poem about her favorite jeans and there was a line about how they know where her body's been better than she does. and that line is stuck in my head know and I'm figuring out that my body has a memory and it remembers and it knows, even if I don't recognize that a lot of the time. and sometimes I don't even trust my body. But this summer I've been trying to trust it more and I've been trying harder not to do things that are going to make me sick and I'm trying to be strong and keep out the bad stuff. summer is good for taking care of your body like that, because you can swim and be in heat and light and if you're lucky you get to go away to beautiful places and sleep more and not be stuck in some ugly office all week long, sucking in awful stale air. But summer will end and it's only july and I'm already so scared of winter, I hope it never gets here. Fall I don't mind, because it's sexy and I love apple orchards and pumpkins and all the colors, but I've really grown to hate winter and how it gets dark practically as soon as you wake up and it's so freezing that you're scared to go outside. And I don't want to spend an entire season hiding in my room because the air outside is so wretched, so I'm trying to think of solutions and ways to keep myself from feeling crazy and gross for 4 months in a row. mostly I wish I could just fly south for the winter. But there's got to be a way to make it all right.





what I was sort of afraid of for a while there. When we were sitting in my car a few weeks ago and he was going through my glove box and found a tape he'd made me years ago and on the inlay card he'd written a note about being in love, I couldn't look him in the eye so I grabbed a pen and drew squiggly lines on my steering wheel. But now I don't even want to flirt and I wish he'd stop kissing my forehead whenever he sees me. it's stupid and his girlfriend would probably scratch my eyeballs out if she ever saw. Or she'd want to at least.

I feel bad about her, the girlfriend. I was so mean to her back when I was the girlfriend and she was the little girl with a crush. mj and I used to torture her and it was so terrible. he was even meaner than I was and I loved him for that. but his was just meanness for meanness' sake—recreational meanness. Which is always so much better and much more fun than the meanness you try on when you want to make some girl know you're better than her, because she might steal away the only boy you have ever loved and will ever love and if she wins you'll just cry a whole big salty ocean of blue blue tears and drown.

mj will be here next week, and he'll sleep on my ugly orange velvet couch and we'll get drunk and make our lungs ache and go to record stores and drive and drive and it will be good. he is my friend and I'd never really planned on that happening and in a way I don't really know him at all. it's crazy who you keep close and who you let go and how you can never plan and when you do it all blows up in your face.

He's one of my favorite people on the planet right now, and so are the two boys and the girl I live with. But I don't know them so well and I want to, because I want where I live to feel like home. I haven't had that in a while but it's getting there because we all like radiohead and bob dylan and pavement and we all like to drink and some Friday nights are about just sitting on the porch and watching the rain, because Fridays are always thunderstorms this summer, and sitting there like that means more to me than going

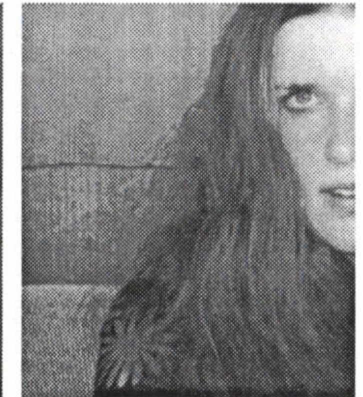
boys and girls, girls and boys

This is where I end up: Tuesday at noon o'clock, with a big box of granulated sugar a knife stained red with strawberry juice. Tonight there will be guitars and maybe a sighting of the girl who is The Girl, the one who always breaks my heart and whenever I talk about her all I can say is "She broke my heart," and it gets really boring for everyone who has to listen. Sometimes I'd like to tell you more but the nicest, safest details have already been put out there: I used to watch her paint, we wore our hair in matching braided pigtails, evan dando put his arms around both of us at the same time. everything else is my secret, and instead of giving it away I'll just repeat myself till I'm blue in the face.

But maybe I won't see her at all tonight. maybe I don't even care if I do or not.

But all I care about lately is boys and girls, girls and boys. they sleep in my notebook or right across the hall or thousands of miles away. I've kicked two out, one boy and one girl, fired them, and these are the two who are supposed to be closest, who are supposed to have my heart.





The girl will be taken back but I'm not sure when.

The boy will become someone else to me and maybe the only thing that will change is that we don't get to sleep in the same bed anymore. we'd been sleeping so far apart anyway, backs to each other, because I wanted it that way.

Which means I'd become like that boy, that other boy, the one who told me how he could never sleep with his hands on anyone else, so we used to wrap our feet around each other instead. Later he wrote a song about it but when he played it at his band's last show he screamed the lyrics so I wouldn't be able to understand, because he was so embarrassed, which was sweet. But he's trouble too; I called him last night and he made me cry, but not on purpose. But I'm not in love with him anymore at least, which is

5. how we soundtrack our seasons

I soundtrack every second of everyday, but in the summer it's more like the parts of the movie where music isn't just something heard faintly in the background, it's the only sound there is. not some cheesy montage of shots where we see the boy & girl falling in love, but when music communicates so much more than whatever dialogue the writer could come up with, and so that's all we get, and it works.

At the beginning, around mid-june or so, I thought I could get away with listening to all jane's addiction all the time for the whole season. Jane's is like carnivals—half magic, half sleaze. It is part love and butterflies and ocean and sweetness and lovesong and waterfalls, and it's part drugs and guitar solos and bad words and sexxxiness. That's sort of everything summer should be (in spirit at least), and listening to it now reminds me of 16 and being in love with all those l.a. bands and dreaming of l.a. and not really knowing what I was dreaming of and inventing sidewalks and beaches and scary places that I knew I belonged in. and of course the song that is my summer theme every year is "summertime rolls," which I'll never get over, ever. I always listen to it on the beach, feet in the water or sometimes sitting on the jetty and trying to see far down between the rocks. I haven't listened to it on the beach yet this summer, though—instead i listen to "I would for you" and "slow divers" and "classic girl." I'm saving "summertime rolls," but I'm not really sure what I'm saving it for.

But I couldn't get away with listening to only jane's all summer long, so there was *is this desire?*, which makes my room glow and hum when it's late at night and sometimes I'll whisper-sing along, into my pillow. Or sleeping with *achtung baby* on repeat, the same way I used to sleep to when I was 13 and it was winter and the album had just come out. I think "so cruel" was written for those precious moments you get every night, half in dream, half awake, always almost-impossible to remember. I used to live for those moments ("hypnagogic," I love that word).

And I listen while I drive, and for a while everytime I put the key into the ignition I'd hear "everything in its right place"—I wanted to listen to all of kid a over and over again before I went to see them, but I kept getting stuck on that one because it's so perfect and it made so much sense. I put it on the tape I played on the way down to see sarah at the cape one july weekend, and there was also some lovely portuguese songs and "sexy boy" by air and "ave lucifer" by os mutantes. Slow sexy dreamy scary crazy spacy songs. But another tape I made was trying to be all dirty and sleazy—aerosmith and royal trux and rolling stones and jane's again—but I don't know if it worked. I try to be black leather in 100 degree air, dirty jeans and whiskey but really I'm kinda faking it. and sometimes I feel more at home driving over the bourne bridge to cape cod with breezy sonic youth songs on the stereo, or something gentle and lovely like "ease your feet into the sea" (belle and sebastian). I put that song on right when I first got onto the bourne and I looked down at the canal and it was all green

and aqua like water looks from far away and for a second I felt like the kind of girl who can listen to sweet little songs like that all the time. just for a second though.

And I saw madonna, on a Wednesday night in the middle of a heat wave, maybe the hottest week of the summer. And my favorite thing was watching her play guitar. I know that's so metalhead-geeky of me, but I don't care. when she stepped out of the dark playing the beginning guitar part of "candy perfume girl," one of the first few songs of the set, I just wanted to jump up and down and scream and scream. But I didn't, because for the most part it wasn't that kind of a night. that's never been my favorite song, but seeing her hands on the strings made it so good. And at the end she sucked on her middle finger and popped it out of her mouth and yelled something that ended in "motherfucker!!!" and it was great.

And then a few days after that I saw radiohead, and the heat wave had ended. It was a gorgeous night and the air was a perfect temperature and it had been so long since I'd been to a big outdoor [rock] show like that. suffolk downs is near the airport so planes were flying right overhead and I kept thinking how neat it would be to be on one of those planes and look down and see all the purple and pink and blue lights and the screens and all the kids staring ahead. one flew over during that part in "paranoid android" where it gets all slow and dramatic and scary, and it was so cool.

I was really far away from the stage because we got there really late, so instead of seeing actual thom yorke I saw his black-and-white image on the one of big screens hung at either side of the stage. And they did this weird thing of layering the images so you could all different band members all at once. But mostly I watched thom, whose camera was at this strange angle sort of reminiscent of that blair witch shot of heather—you know which one I mean, where the camera is right up her nose. His head kind of bopped around the whole time and looked crazy and good. Now I have a crush. Which is good because I've needed a new rockstar crush for a long time now.

And for so long afterward all I wanted to hear was radiohead, cuz they did that thing of blowing your mind so completely that they're all you want to hear for the next few days or for the rest of your life. I never really liked them all that much before, and now I am and now I love them. They made everything all right; seriously. Which means they are doing their job.

And my last summer Friday night for 2001 was pj harvey at a sorta-little theater in downtown boston. and it was so sweaty. Either there was no air conditioner at all or it just wasn't working, so the whole time my body was just dripping, pouring, oozing, bleeding sweat. The seats were a lot further from the stage than I'd expected, a million miles farther away from where I stood when I saw her at the paradise in december, but it was still good. seeing her in the dead of winter and then at the end of the following summer is something you should do before you die.

I watch the band and I think, if I were younger my heart would be exploding right now. if I were as little as stacy again, I would be in heaven right here. But instead I'm bored and all alone, and I hate it.

Tonight when I picked up shelly, the shyest girl's best friend, the girl with the hair horns and the greasy bubblegum lip gloss, my stomach started to hurt. And I drove to maggie and stacy's house and i didn't say much and let the best friends talk to each other. Sophie said, "dan's going to be there and he can sell us drugs if you want." and shelly said, "I don't have any money," and she looked out the window. Tonight's the first time she's been in my car. And the reason my stomach hurt was my stomach always hurts when I see her. It's because she is the most beautiful thing you'll ever see in your life. But one time I showed someone a picture of her, and the someone said, "she's really ugly. Why is _______ going out with her?" and I got mad and put the picture away.

After the set ends I start pushing my way back through the crowd, through all the kids yelling for an encore. At the center, towards the front, just a few feet from the stage, there's stacy and shelly and sophie. Stacy sees me and hugs me and she says, "where is my sister?" and I tell her I lost her and she looks worried, and she says, "she must be scared." and I'm surprised because stacy is usually such a brat about her sister and pretends like she doesn't need her. But then maggie's with us again, she's fought her way up to the front and she looks freaked out but happy too and she hugs me and stacy and we all hug together.

The band comes back onstage and they are so close and the boys start pushing again and we push back. we keep pushing them away and away and away and we don't get knocked down. I look at stacy and shelly and sophie and I know they've been doing this all night and they're not tired at all, their faces are shining and they're not going to fall down.

For the last song they bring on the house lights and the pushing stops long enough for us to pogo and sing along and I'm so close to that boy who was my world when I was 16 like stacy. And then it's over so fast and we stumble out, not holding hands but bumping into each other over and over again because we're so dizzy and drained. I look at shelly and all her lip gloss has faded and I know my mascara has mostly been rubbed off and my eyes must look something between electric and dead-tired.

In my car it smells like sweat from all of us and cigarettes from stacy and bubblegum from shelly and patchouli from sophie and peach body splash stuff from maggie. And it's our sweat too, because it's so hot out and we've been pushing against all these other bodies all night long. and I don't know what I smell like, because you never really know what your own body smells like. All I can smell is the boy's shirt, which smells like his hair, and one morning I used his shampoo so all day my hair smelled like that too. my car won't smell like this for too long, probably not even long enough to last me the drive from sophie's house to home. if I could bottle it I'd wear it every day and never ever share because it's all ours. It's the only thing that's all ours.

smokes away even though you're not supposed to smoke in here. We're both wearing hooded sweatshirts, my hair is a big messy bun on top of my head, hers is braided pigtails. The shyest girl has her hair all flowing down her back, but it's not violet anymore. her best friend has those little horns on either side of her head; the girl who's oldest after me has curls all around her face, big fat bouncy blonde curls. In the bathroom the one with the hair horns puts on pink lip gloss and she lets me have some and it's greasy and tastes like bubblegum.

I am the only one who's name doesn't end in an eeee sound. Staceee, maggieee, shelleeee, sophieeee. But sometimes they add the "eee" onto my name too, and when it's the really gorgeous one saying it I almost blush.

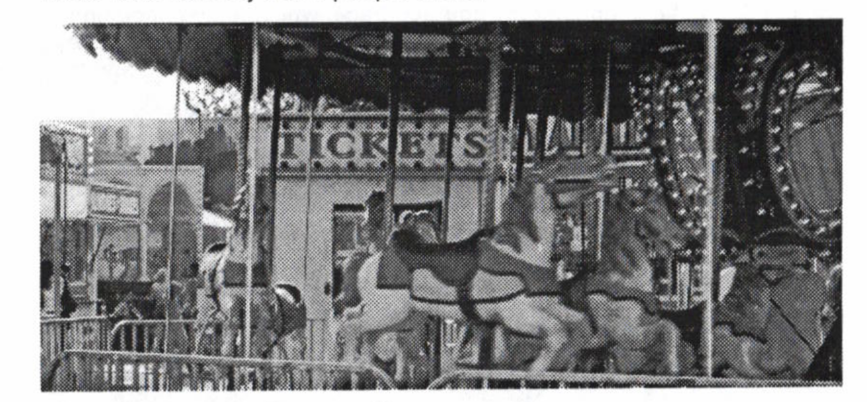
But right now it's maggie, the older sister, saying my name like that. the lights have gone down and everyone's pushing and she's holding my hand so tight, she's scared and I feel bad. So I start to pull her to the side and it's hard getting out of this big swirly sea of bodies pushing all against us, we trip but we don't fall. I hold onto her hand and our grip is so slippery with sweat but I'm not going to let her go. But then when I'm almost at the outside of the crowd there's another big rush of bodies and our hands slip away from each other and we get pushed in different directions and she's gone and I can't believe how fast she's been taken away from me. when I'm finally at the edge I climb up the steps toward the section with seats and I try to find maggie but I can't and I give up.

I'm standing there and looking down and I remember, oh yeah, this is my favorite band and I came here to see them and I have waited for years and years to be here. but for some reason it doesn't really matter all that much. I haven't been listening to them much lately and I'm scared for maggie and I'm wearing this boy's shirt and I don't even know if that means anything to him and I miss the old guitarist. And after the first song's over a security guy comes over to me and says I can't just stand in the aisle, I have to go back down to the floor. so I do and I try to stay on the edge because I don't want to get sucked back into all those waves of boys pushing and sweating and screaming and high-fiving when the song's over. like they're the ones who actually played it.

Maggie's little sister is stacy who used to go out with jared who dumped her for shelly whose best friend is sophie who sometimes kisses joe who sometimes kisses me. out of all of them I'm probably closest with stacy. One time I even let her read a story I wrote, and I never ever do that; I always hide everything. She's still in love with jared and I feel sad for her, but she's a tough girl and I know that she'll be okay. and now he's gone and dumped shelly too so it's easier for stacy and shelly to be friends again because now they can both hate him. which sounds like they're mean or stupid but I don't mean it that way at all.

my favorite was about halfway through the set when she went from "rid of me" (alone on the stage) to "somebody down, somebody's name" to "down by the water." There was a fan on the side of the stage and it was blowing her hair around and blowing through her red shiny slinky dress, and it was all dirty and high drama and loud and hard and crazy and everything you want polly harvey to be for you. She played all those songs when I saw her before but not in that order, and that makes a difference. And when she played songs she hadn't played last time, that was wonderful. Like "the sky lit up" after she opened with "man size." But especially "beautiful feeling." I was sort of coming off feeling woozy from alcohol and nicotine, and everyone in front of me sat down, so I could look straight ahead and stare at her. And at the beginning of the song I was thinking, "everything is bad and it's never going to be okay and I'm never going to do anything good ever and I'm never going to be brave and I'm always going to do what I don't want to do and I hate the way I am." it was a scary moment and I was so irritated with myself for letting it happen. But sometime before the song was over I felt different. And pretty soon after that I completely forgot/lost the awful feeling and it was just moving and singing along and sweating and sweating.

it ended & I was exhausted but it in the good, euphoric/glowy way. while my friend was in the bathroom I sat in the hallway, at this removed row of theater chairs and there was a window open behind me and the breeze felt so good and I watched everyone coming down the stairs and squishing to get out and I was surprised to see that there were actually other people there.



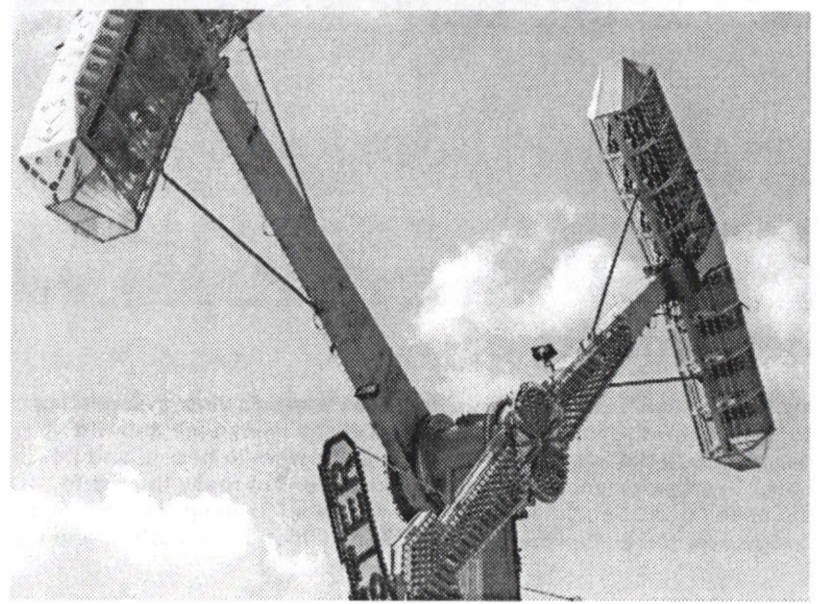
6. memories of water

my friend naomi's parents had a house on martha's vineyard, and the summer before senior year of high school she invited me and two of our friends to the island for the day. And we went to beach, and I'd never been swimming on the vineyard before. But really the trip to the beach wasn't about swimming; it was about jumping. There was a bridge over the place where boats passed to get to the harbor, and all

lined up on the bridge were kids younger and older than us. I can't say how high up the bridge was because I'm so bad about math, but it was high enough for me to be scared as hell. But I knew I had to jump, because I'd be so mad at myself if I didn't.

So we went up and we climbed over the railing and stood leaning forward and gripping the metal in back of us and trying so hard not to slip. My stomach hurt and I wanted to turn around and go back but that really wasn't an option. I forget who jumped first of the four of us, but I know it wasn't me. I watched at least one or two of my friends plunge into the water before me, and I had terrible thoughts of shifting a little too far towards the left or the right and landing on one of the jetties below and cracking my skull open. And I started to feel dumb just standing there, hanging on to the railing and watching all these children so much younger than me just throwing themselves in with no fear at all. and I jumped. I think I closed my eyes, but maybe not. The craziest part of jumping like that is you don't hit the water when you think you're going to—you just sort of keep going and going and you're stomach drops and you feel like you'll be falling forever. And then all of a sudden you're shooting straight down through ocean and there's salt in your mouth and water up your nose and you don't go down far enough for your feet to touch the squishy sand, but it feels like you're close.

After I surfaced I swam around the jetty and dragged myself out of the water and stretched out on the sand with everyone else and laughed at ourselves and for a second I thought I might jump again, but I just couldn't get my courage back. which is disappointing, I know—you'd think that once the girl finally jumps off the bridge she won't be afraid of anything anymore, but it doesn't work that way.





perfume

We work our way through the crowd single file, but holding hands in this little chain weaving through all the sweaty thuggy boys and trying to make it to the front of the stage. Five girls; some of us hardly know each other but we are all here together, and we're going to get to the front so we can stand in front of that tattooed guitar boy and look up and he can smile down on us or scowl if he wants to, and maybe blow us kisses.

Two of us are sisters, another two are best friends since they were five-years-old, I am the oldest. I'm away at school; they're all still here, and they're jealous of me because I can smoke cigarettes in bed and skip class all the time and never come home at night and generally do whatever I want whenever I want to. The second oldest is six months younger than me, her little sister is 15 months younger than her. The other two are the same age as the little sister. It's a math equation.

I drove here and the first girl I picked up was the one who's the shyest out of all of us. No, I'm the shyest. No, she is. no; I don't know. but she is shy, and we've really never said much to each other. But we've kissed the same boy and we sort of take turns being the one who's most in love with him but we never really realize it. when she was in tenth grade and I was in twelth I used to see her in the hall and stare at her hair because she dyed it violet and someone told me she was the one who drew the picture of kurt cobain that was in the glass case in the art hallway. You'd think a picture some girl drew of kurt cobain for tenth grade art class would be awful and cheesy, but it was beautiful.

Before we went down to the floor we made a trip to the bathroom, and waiting in line the little sister tells me, "I like your shirt." I tell her, "it's his." And she smiles this sly smile and says, "oh, wearing his clothes, huh?" she lights a cigarette and she